



JUN 30 2020

Indian Health Service
Rockville, MD 20857

The Honorable Tom Udall
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Udall:

Thank you for your May 27 letter regarding products supplied by Zach Fuentes, LLC to Indian Health Service (IHS) facilities in the Navajo Area IHS. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to your questions and address your concerns. Moreover, I want to assure you that the IHS is committed to providing comprehensive, quality-focused health care in an environment that is safe for our patients and staff.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has worked to address nationwide shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE), including those reported at facilities across the IHS. In particular, the Navajo Area experienced challenges in acquiring PPE and other supplies, such as N95 respirators and non-N95 face masks, gloves, gowns, sanitation wipes, goggles, and face shields.

After completing inspection of the products, IHS sent a letter to the contractor explaining that the items tendered for acceptance did not conform to the terms of IHS' order and that it was appropriate to enter into a no-cost termination of the contract. The contractor refused and submitted a certified claim for payment. IHS is considering all of its options, which may include potentially referring the matter to the Office of Inspector General.

We appreciate all your efforts to assist the Navajo Nation and help us provide the best possible health care services to American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes and communities. A similar letter is being sent to the other signatories of your letter. I trust this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

RADM Michael D. Weahkee, MBA, MHSA
Assistant Surgeon General, U.S. Public Health Service
Director